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*The National Women's Health Information Center*

A project of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health



## Frequently Asked Questions about Folic Acid – Easy to Read

### What is folic acid?

Folic acid (or folate) is a vitamin (vai-te-mihn). Vitamins are found in foods and help make your body work right.

### Why is folic acid good for you?

When you are pregnant, folic acid can help keep your baby from having bad health problems. If you don't get enough folic acid, your baby may get these problems:

- Spina bifida (spy-nuh bif-uh-duh): your baby's spine doesn't form right.
- Anencephaly (an-en-seffele): the baby doesn't have a brain or has only part of a brain and can't live.

You can keep these problems from happening. Take folic acid before you get pregnant and in the first 3 months while you're pregnant. You may think you don't need folic acid now if you don't plan to have a baby soon. It's still a good idea to take folic acid, so it's in your body if you do get pregnant. Plus, it could also help lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

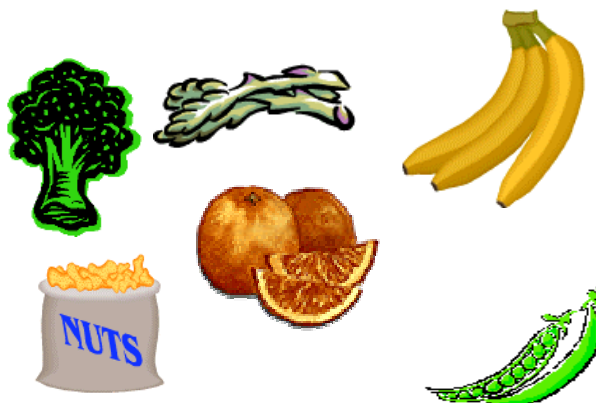
### How can you get folic acid?

The best way to get folic acid is to take a vitamin pill that has folic acid in it.



You can also eat foods that have folic acid in them. Here are some:

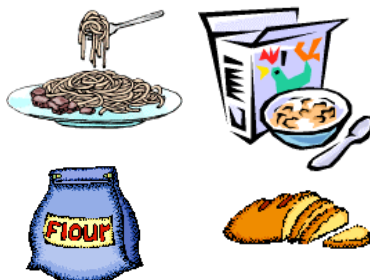
- orange juice
- oranges
- bananas
- spinach
- dried navy beans
- peanuts
- broccoli
- asparagus
- peas



- lentils

Some foods have folic acid added to them, like:

- flour
- rice
- spaghetti
- bread
- cereals



Look at the package and the food label to see if the foods have folic acid in them. Find foods that say they have folic acid. The label will tell you how much folic acid is in vitamin pills and foods. Sometimes, the label will say folate instead of folic acid. It is the same thing.

Vitamin Label

Supplement Facts		
Serving Size: 1 tablet		
Amount Per Serving		% Daily Value
Vitamin A	5000IU	100
Vitamin C	60mg	100
Vitamin D	400 IU	100
Vitamin E	30 IU	100
Thiamin	1.5mg	100
Riboflavin	1.7mg	100
Niacin	20mg	100
Vitamin B6	2mg	100
<b>Folic Acid</b>	<b>400mcg</b>	<b>100</b>
Vitamin B12	6mcg	100
Biotin	30mcg	10
Pantothenic Acid	10mg	100
Calcium	162mg	16
Iron	18mg	100
Iodine	150mcg	100
Magnesium	100mg	25
Zinc	15mg	100
Selenium	20mcg	100
Copper	2mg	100
Manganese	3.5mg	175
Chromium	65mcg	54
Molybdenum	150mcg	200
Chloride	72mg	2
Potassium	80mg	2

Food Label

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)			
Servings Per Container 2			
Amount Per Serving		Calories from Fat 110	
Calories 250		% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b>	12g		18%
Saturated Fat	3g		15%
<b>Cholesterol</b>	30mg		10%
<b>Sodium</b>	470mg		20%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	31g		10%
Dietary Fiber	0g		0%
Sugar	5g		
<b>Protein</b>	5g		
Vitamin A			4%
Vitamin C			2%
Calcium			20%
Iron			4%
<b>Folate</b>			<b>30%</b>
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
Calories:		2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	30mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrates		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Find folic acid. Read across to see how much folic acid is in your vitamin.

Find folate. Read across to see how much folic acid is in your food.

## How much folic acid should you take?

Read the descriptions below to see how much folic acid you should take. Check off the one that applies to you.

- ☐ You are able to get pregnant. Take 400mcg (or .4mg) of folic acid every day.
- ☐ You are pregnant. Take 600mcg (or .6mg) of folic acid every day.
- ☐ You are breastfeeding. Take 500mcg (or .5mg) of folic acid every day.
- ☐ You had a baby with spina bifida or anencephaly and want to get pregnant again. Take 4000mcg (or 4mg) of folic acid every day. Start one month before you get pregnant and take folic acid during the first three months of pregnancy.
- ☐ You had a baby with spina bifida or anencephaly and don't want to get pregnant. Take 400mcg (or .4mg) of folic acid every day.

Even if you take folic acid, you should still see your health care provider. She can make sure you and your baby are healthy.

## For more information...

You can find out more about folic acid from the National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at (800) 994-WOMAN (9662) or from these organizations:

### National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Centers

Phone Number(s): (888) 232-6789

Internet Address: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd>

### Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

Phone Number(s): (888) 723-3366

Internet Address: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov>

### March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation

Phone Number(s): (888) 663-4637

Internet Address: <http://www.modimes.org>

### Spina Bifida Association of America

Phone Number(s): (800) 621-3141

Internet Address: <http://www.sbaa.org/index.shtml>

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*April 2003*